



TOWN OF NORTHBRIDGE
OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE

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**MEETING MINUTES MAY 11, 2022
PUBLIC FORUM**

Present: Barbara McNamee, Chair; Christopher Allen; Rainer Forst; Christine Johnson; Glenn King; Chloe Mawn; Mike Proto; Mike Tonry; Joel Vande Werken; and Gary Bechtholdt, Town Planner
Absent: Bruce Frieswick & David Troen-Krasnow
Public: Jonathan Smith, Disability Commission Chair; Mary Sughrue-Yaceto; Charlie Watler; Mike Bangma; Alvin; and Stefanie Corvino, Blackstone Watershed Collaborative

I. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Barbara McNamee opens the meeting. Gary Bechtholdt introduces committee and members of the public who are present.

II. OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN OVERVIEW

Glenn King provides an overview of the Open Space & Recreation Plan process and the state guidelines within which the committee is working as it makes the updated plan. He then offers a brief summary of the committee's work so far and the progress made on the plan to date.

III. BLACKSTONE RIVER WATERSHED NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT (SEPTEMBER 2021)

Stefanie Corvino of the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative reviewed the "Blackstone River Watershed Needs Assessment Report" completed in September 2021. The Report includes action items at a regional level for the Blackstone River Watershed (Narragansett Bay), where the OSRP Update will look to incorporate shared goals and action items at a local level for Northbridge. A copy of the Needs Assessment Report has been uploaded onto the town's Open Space & Recreation Plan Update Committee's webpage with link to the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative (www.blackstonecollaborative.org).

IV. 2022 PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

Christine Johnson provides a summary of the survey undertaken by the OSRP update committee earlier this year and identifies some of the key findings from the survey. She notes that the survey received 286 responses and had strong input from all sectors of the community and indicated the need for improvement of facilities and open space availability in the Town. In particular, residents expressed an interest in bike trails, protected open space, and hiking or walking trails; these themes were also seen in a number of the responses received in the "open comments" section of the survey, indicating the validity of the results the committee received.

V. OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION LAND INVENTORY & CONDITIONS

Barbara McNamee summarizes the OSRP update committee's findings concerning existing open space in Northbridge, including those privately held parcels protected under Chapter 61 of the MGL. The Town has 547 acres of undeveloped land, but only 221 acres with permanent protections. Since 2002, Northbridge has lost 1563 acres of open space. Barbara also asks Michael Proto to report on the condition of the playgrounds and ballfields on behalf of the Playground & Recreation Commission. The Recreation Commission manages 33 acres but has only two functional playgrounds: Plummer Skateboard Park and the East Street Tot Lot. Michael identifies a number of areas of need, particularly with regard to the age and accessibility of playground equipment and basketball courts. He also notes that the Playground & Recreation Committee currently has plans to upgrade particular recreation facilities.

VI. PUBLIC INPUT AND COMMENTS

Members of the public are invited to ask questions or offer feedback on the work of the OSRP update committee as reported this evening. Charlie Watler notes the need for maps of Town recreational facilities and trails. Mike Bangma observes the importance of preserving connected areas of open space. Mary Sughrue-Yaceto indicates she is interested in trails. Jonathan Smith, Chair of the Disability Commission explained that he was in attendance on behalf of the Disability Commission and offered his assistance.

Gary Bechtholdt, on behalf of the Committee, thanks all members of the public for their time and interest in this OSRP update process.

VII. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Meeting Minutes (April 13, 2022)

Glenn King makes a motion to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2022 meeting. The motion is seconded and the vote to approve is unanimous.

Public Outreach

It is hoped that members of the committee can attend the Board of Selectmen meeting in June to provide further updates on our work to that body.

Future Agenda Items

Before our next meeting, some work is needed on Section VII of the OSRP (Analysis of Needs). Christine Johnston will lead the effort to pull some members together to work on the draft of that section.

Next Meeting Date

Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, June 8, 2022 at 7:00 pm, on Zoom. Glenn King is to coordinate ZOOM link, as Gary Bechtholdt will not be able to attend.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting of May 11, 2022 was adjourned approximately at 8:50 p.m.

Prepared By: Joel Vande Werken, Clerk

Date Approved: _____